

9-1-1 On The Lake with Little Elm Training Captain

JEREMY FULLER

BY MELANIE HESS

PHOTOS BY OTHERRED PHOTOGRAPHY

Firefighting is in Little Elm Training Captain Jeremy Fuller's blood. Together, he, his father, and grandfather have spent 80 years serving North Texans through their local fire departments.

"Firefighting seemed natural," Fuller said, explaining his career choice. "I grew up around it, and helping people is built-in."

Fuller explained that he also valued how the 24-hour on and 48-hour off schedule would allow him to be there for his family the way his dad was present for him.

Dream Come True

Even now, as Fuller reaches 20 years in the fire service, he still describes working for Little Elm Fire Department as his dream job. The fire department's staff has grown exponentially, totaling nearly 80 and Little Elm's population has soared to almost 50,000. Despite this growth, the camaraderie he's found in fellow firefighters, many of whom have been together for the last 15 years, makes it feel like he still lives in a small town.

Training Captain: A New Role

In March 2021, Fuller accepted a promotion from crew captain to training captain, which, in many ways, is not unlike a coach.

Instead of doing the traditional work of a firefighter on a call, Fuller only responds to select calls where he often plays more of an observer.

"I'll take a lot of pictures and video, so I can capture things our firefighters may not notice," he explained.

Later, he uses these videos to address firefighters' strengths and areas for improvement.

He's also responsible for paperwork, compliance, budgets, and all the other important but more tedious tasks required for a department to run smoothly.

While Fuller admits not every aspect of his job is as exciting as it once was, and his hours are now Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. rather than the 24 on, 48 off shifts he worked for the majority of his career, there are perks he wouldn't give back.

"I've got a 14-year-old and 13-year-old now, and they're involved in lots of activities," he said. "I love being home every night and not getting woken up every night for all kinds of calls."

Responding to Calls

Fuller still responds to certain calls outside of training preparation. At house fires he typically takes on a supervisory role. In other situations he may serve as a safety officer or simply provide another set of eyes on the scene.

Of course, he hasn't entirely given up on traditional field work, even if many of the calls he takes occur during off time.

Fuller, who lives on the water with his wife and two kids, said he enjoys being able to do "9-1-1 on the water" and said many of the firefighters with less water experience see him as the unofficial "lake guru" of the Little Elm Fire Department.

"I grew up on the lake," Fuller explained. "So I know where everything is on the water and how to get there."

So, as one might expect, Fuller responds to lake calls from his home.

"I have a jet ski down behind the house," Fuller shared. "If I hear stuff that I know a lot of our guys with little lake experience might need help with, I'll run out and give them a hand."

He also takes a lot of calls from more novice boaters or skiers who may run into sticky situations.

"My wife is used to it," he said. "If she sees me grab my radio and run, she knows I'm up to something."

Firefighter Mental Health and Wellness Program

In addition to his position as a training captain, Fuller is the fire department's Wellness and Peer Support Coordinator, which means he's responsible for the department's health and wellness. Fuller has witnessed the devastating effects trauma can have on firefighters and has lost friends in the fire service to suicide. Unfortunately, these issues are not unique to the departments where he's worked. In fact, both firefighters and police officers are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty, according to the National Alliance for Mental Health.

Naturally, he takes this area of his job very seriously. He worked hard to get the department's mental wellness budget approved. As a result, Little Elm firefighters can confidentially speak with therapists equipped to work with the trauma first responders experience. Our mental wellness program is a huge success," Fuller said. "A lot of our members are using it, and the programs we have set up are spreading quickly to other departments in the area. I'm very proud of our town and department for the support we receive in this area. We are very fortunate."

Fuller's role in the fire department looks quite different than it did a year ago, but, at the end of the day, he's excited about the new ways he now contributes.

"I always just wanted to have a career that felt like I was serving and giving back to the people in the place where I grew up," he said. "It's been a joy and a complete pleasure to be able to serve Little Elm."

BEST D
D Magazine
VOTED BEST
Pediatric Dentist

Celebrating Healthy Smiles since 2009

HEALTHY HINTS #5

To prevent tooth decay in a baby, avoid nursing your child to sleep or putting anything other than water in their bedtime bottle. Tooth decay can begin as soon as baby teeth emerge (between 6 and 10 months). Clean your baby's teeth and gums with a damp cloth or gauze pad after feeding to remove plaque.

living
best of
FRISCO 9
PLANO
READER'S CHOICE

12398 FM 423
Suite 1900
at Eldorado Pkwy
in the Walmart Shopping Ctr
Frisco, Texas 75033
214 ★ 436 ★ 4774
www.HealthyChildrensSmiles.com

Healthy Smiles
Children's Dentistry
Creating Smiles with Soft Power

Pediatric Dentist
Mila Davis, DDS
Board Certified
Pediatric Dentist